*410. [The questioner (Shrimati Sunita Sharda) was absent for answer *vide* page 65 *infra*.]

*411. [The questioner (Shri Dara Singh Chauhan) was absent for answer *vide* page 65-66 *infra*.]

*412. [The questioner (Shri Balkavi Bairagi) was absent for answer vide page 66-67 *infra*.]

*413. [The questioner (Shri C. Ramachandraiah) was absent for answer *vide* page 68 *infra*.]

Evacuation of Indians from Iraq

*414. SHRI R.P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) Whether it is a fact that Government have advised all Indians in Iraq to leave that country as soon as possible in view of US-led attack on Iraq; and

(b) the details of the evacuation plans if any, drawn up, and other steps initiated to protect the Indian interests in Iraq?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VIOND KHANNA): (a) and (b) Prior to the commencement of military action on March 20, on advice of the Indian Embassy in Baghdad, most Indian nationals in Iraq voluntarily left the country. There has been no need to evacuate them. Less than 20 Indian nationals are reportedly still in Iraq, all of whom have chosen to stay. In view of India's abiding friendship with the Iraqi people, India has announced that it would make a contribution of US$20 million in cash and kind to the UN Emergency appeal. The adjusted Oil for Food Programme gives an opportunity to Indian companies to meet Iraqi priority needs.

श्री आर० पी० गोयनका: सभापति महोदय, मैंने 15 दिन पहले सवाल किया था। इसके बाद से इराक में इतनी तेजी से युद्ध की गति बढ़ी है कि अब यह सवाल कुछ अटपटा सा लग रहा है।

श्री सभापति: अटपटा सा लग रहा है तो मत पूछिए।

श्री आर० पी० गोयनका: मैं आपकी इजाजत से इसी सवाल में आपसे यह पूछना चाहता हूं कि क्या एम्बेसी का स्टाफ वापस चला गया है, अगर नहीं गया है तो कब तक जाएगा?

SHRI VINOD KHANNA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Embassy staff was moved to Amman before the war broke out and they are still there. As soon as normalcy returns in Baghdad, we will take a decision whether to move them there or not.

श्री आर० पी० गोयनका: सर, मेरा दूसरा सवाल यह है कि आपने दोनों सदनों में रिजोल्यूशन तो पास कर दिया, बहुत अच्छी बात है। रिजोल्यूशन के बाद अब इराक का पुनर्निर्माण करने में हमें कुछ कार्य मिलेगा, क्या उम्मीदें हैं?

श्री सभापति: यह प्रश्न पूछते तो ज्यादा अच्छा रहता कि कल का प्रस्ताव इराक की सरकार को भेज दिया है या नहीं भेज दिया है?

श्री आर० पी० गोयनका: सर, इतनी हिम्मत नहीं थी, यह पूछने की।

SHRI VINOD KHANNA: Sir, the 'Oil for Food' programme was established in April, 1995, after the adoption of the U.N. Security Resolution 986. Indian companies had secured contracts worth 1.1 billion dollars till the end of 2002. The 'Oil for Food' programme was temporarily suspended on March 17, 2003, after which the U.N. officials were withdrawn from Iraq. After the adoption of the Resolution 1472, the Permanent Mission of India to the U.N. contacted the office of the Iraq Programme with the lists of Indian approved contracts, where consignments have already been shipped, as provided by the companies concerned. The United Nations has included contracts of 18 Indian companies worth approximately 3 million dollars in its priority list of March 29, 2003. That is the latest position.

SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR: Sir, the Minister has been pleased to admit that there are at least 20 Indian nationals who have chosen to remain in Iraq. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government has found out about their safety, whether they are still safe and alive. That is the first part of my supplementary. The second part pertains to the Minister's answer about the steps initiated to secure India's interests. Now, in the post war scenario, the only

way we can secure our interests is to be able to facilitate our companies to make a meaningful contribution in the reconstruction of Iraq. What are the specific initiatives taken by the Government to ensure that this is done and done meaningfully?

SHRI VINOD KHANNA: Sir, as regards the first part of the supplementary, we still have about 19 people in Iraq, about which I can give you the figures. There are charity workers, eight of them, in Karbala; there are four students in Najaf, one student and three nuns in Bhagdad and two journalists, Satish Jacob and Sayyeed Nissami. We have no contacts with our Mission over there since the 28th March, and we are still trying to make contacts. But we have heard from the journalist, Satish Jacob, that they have no information as to whether these Indians are safe or not. But both the journalists are safe. And, that is a very encouraging thing. As regards the second aspect, it is only when everything is resolved in Iraq, when everything settles down, when the new Government comes in, the interim Government, and thereafter the Treaty, we will be able to decide what we can do for the Indian companies and the Indian contracts.

SHRI KULDIP NAYYAR: Sir, the Minister, in his reply, has said that the Indian Embassy staff will come back after the war is over, or, after normalcy, something like that. Now, does it depend upon the complexion of the Government? There may be, say, six months of Army rule by the Americans. So, what is the policy of the Government of India? Is it that whatever be the set up, you will come back?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): The question which has been raised by the hon. Member pertains to the future. As far as we are aware, hostilities are still on. We cannot say, at this point of time, that the Government, which was in Iraq, has been finally deposed. Therefore, we will take a view as the situation evolves and emerges. And, let me assure the House that India will take a view which is consistent with our policy, which is consistent with our friendship with the Iraqi people.